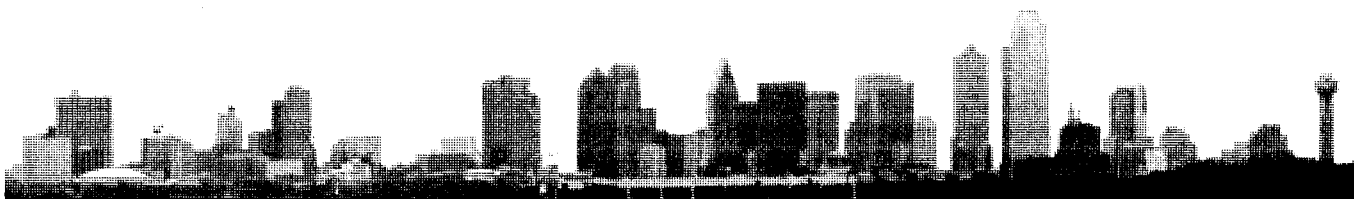


# MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



Fort Worth

Volume 13 Issue 7 — July 1995

Dallas

## Another Five Years

a look back at where the amiga has been

by Johnny C. Kitchens

**I**t's hard to believe that it has been five years since I wrote an article celebrating the fifth anniversary of the official rollout of the Amiga. That day was July 23, 1985! At the time of my article the 3000 was the new machine to see and ECS chipset was the new setup for all Amigas. Motorola's 68030 was the hot CPU with 68040 due to be released soon. The 3000 was showing what to expect from 2.0, a completely new OS for the Amiga. Although it appeared that Commodore was preparing to market the Amiga properly in 1990, it never happened.

Since 1990, we saw 2.0 and the Video Toaster come about. While 2.0 gave most Amiga owners a new world to explore, it was the Toaster that was grabbing the headlines everywhere, while the Amiga remained in its shadow, but it certainly gave Amiga owners something to holler about! Meanwhile, the Amiga appeared to be losing its edge to non-Toaster users. The competition was catching up. Nevertheless, Commodore was raking in the money due to the Toaster. At one point its stock became a hot topic as it climbed rapidly to new highs. Commodore introduced the 3000T, but it seemed to go unnoticed. Motorola's 68040 hit the market with a new level of performance to experience, but even that didn't seem to really shake things up as expected. It was the introduction of the 4000 late in 1992 followed shortly by the 1200, that got everything exciting again. These machines introduced the AGA chipset, a new OS, as well as other changes to the architecture. Some thought it was a way of taking the lead away from the competition. It seemed to others to be just a catch up in performance. Introduction of a Video Toaster for the 4000 seemed to be the last bright light in the world of the Amiga. A whole list of new products were promised from Commodore to compliment the new Amigas.

1993 turned into a nose dive year for Commodore. Talk of them selling out filtered through the rumor mills. All sorts of new products did come from outside of

Commodore. Amazing new graphics cards were introduced, giving incredible new graphics to all Amigas. The Amiga finally got a high density floppy drive, though far too few, and too expensive for most. Motorola kept promising the 68060 for truly incredible performance — we are still waiting. *PageStream 3.1* was a wait and see piece of software. Commodore began talking about a 4000T that featured SCSI, something missing from the 4000, and 3.1 OS, to allow non-AGA machines to use the new OS of the 4000 and 1200!

Then the shocker! Commodore announces it's filing for bankruptcy on April 29, 1994. Nothing could have hurt the Amiga more than that. So many people changed platforms after that, the Amiga may never recover from it. Although rumors of hope kept popping up like clockwork, none proved true. Like some sort of omen we get some sad news. Jay Minor, considered by most to be the "Father of the Amiga," had passed away after a long illness. Oddly enough, 3.1 and the 4000T actually appeared on the market after Commodore's demise! It would be a year of listening to how Samsung, CEI, and Commodore UK were going to buy up everything and get the Amiga going again. The later two in particular kept putting out news releases to get our hopes up. Strangely enough, just about everyone was rumored to be in a position to buy up what was left. Suddenly, another bit of bad news hits us. *Amiga World*, the magazine, will be no more! While we had watched *Amiga World* wither away, few thought this would happen. How can we take much more of this?

Then, out of the blue, a German company called Escom gets everything almost a year to the day after the news about the bankruptcy has shocked us. Escom is their name and they have made all sorts of promises, and the rumors are flying again. I hope they can do it for the Amiga, and maybe the tenth anniversary of the Amiga can be the first year of a new beginning. I can only hope I have something good to write about in five years. ✓

# Escom Speaks

words from Manfred Schmitt and Petro Tyschtschenko  
text of speeches captured from the internet

**F**rankfurt/Main, May 30, 1995

**Speech of Manfred Schmitt  
Escom AG, Chairman of the Executive Board**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since we won the auction for the intellectual property of Commodore and Amiga, the ESCOM AG is flooded with congratulation messages. Amiga clubs and Amiga users write to ask us to revive and continue to develop and improve the Amiga. Many of them actually sent us their wishes for future hardware architectures and operating systems improvements.

However, it is still unclear for many users how a PC manufacturer and retailer will use the Amiga technology.

Here is our answer:

ESCOM now turns from a PC manufacturer and retailer into a multimedia company. The big multimedia applications will come very soon as Pay-TV, Video on demand, homebanking, home-shopping and online services. In this growing market, we want to become a leading provider of hardware, software and solutions. Our goal is to give the user a cost-efficient way to access all these new services the multimedia world will allow. The Amiga technology brings us all we need here in an elegant way. We see in the Amiga the key to Multimedia technologies for the future.

As an intelligent terminal, you all know the PC. Many people use the PC in conjunction with a modem to access online services and the worldwide Internet. Escom is providing that market with a wide palette of advantageously priced Multimedia PCs in a range between 2000 and 3000 DM.

But there are other user profiles, who want to use the multimedia technology without having to spend several thousands of DM. For these users, the Amiga represents a very interesting alternative. It stands out with an amazing price/quality ratio. Also remarkable is the operating system with a still unmatched multitasking ability. That means that several applications can run simultaneously, depending on available memory, without slowing down the whole system. This is achieved by the smart resource sharing of the system and the low consumption of RAM and processing power by the applications.

The Amiga operating system needs 8 times less memory than Windows, and it multitasks better than Windows. Through this smart use of system resources, the Amiga is still a very efficient and inexpensive computer.

Video is another strength of the Amiga. In this aspect, the Amiga is superior to the PC. The video output

of the Amiga is already PAL and NTSC compatible, so it can just be plugged into a TV or any video monitor. A PC needs a converter to do this. The Amiga represents a possibility to give people access to interactive television, online services and pay TV with set top boxes at decent prices like 400 DM. The market is huge because there are many more televisions than computers in the homes.

The set top box is a concrete application involving Amiga technology that we want to improve. For the American market, which is much more advanced than Europe in this regard, we already have license agreements with our partner VisCorp — our first licence, by the way. We are willing to be very flexible and open-minded regarding licensing of our technology. Amiga developers and manufacturers shall have the chance to talk with us to define partnerships or license agreements. Together, we will develop a wide range of Amiga hardware and software. Our goal is a productive, open Amiga technology. The example of VisCorp demonstrates it at best: we license Amiga technology to people who want to integrate it in their own products. The press already talked about another partner, the Tianjin Family-Used Multimedia Co. Ltd. They will build the lower range of Amiga computers and revive the legendary Commodore 64 for the chinese market.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have mainly talked about the Amiga. In New York, we also took over another well known brand: Commodore. All of you surely remember the good old Commodore 64 and its tremendous success in the early eighties. It is still a famous episode in the home computer history that could be compared to the Volkswagen Beetle. A recent study made by the German economic magazine DM reveals that the name Commodore still has very high recognition. 93 percent of all PC users know the trademark Commodore. Such a reputation is only surpassed by IBM.

We will now separate Commodore and Amiga operations. Amiga will be the multimedia range with Motorola processors and Commodore for Intel based Personal Computers. We want to use all available and appropriate distribution channels both for Commodore and Amiga: specialized retail stores, warehouses, and mail order services. The ESCOM subsidiaries are only one of many possibilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are convinced that ESCOM, Commodore and Amiga will become a success story. Look at the structure and competencies we have built up in a short time.

Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the General manager of Amiga Technologies GmbH, I would like to welcome you to the first press conference of our new company and also tell you how much we appreciate your presence here.

At a spectacular auction, five weeks ago in New York, ESCOM AG acquired the rights to the intellectual property of the former Commodore company for 10 Mio \$, including all trademarks, logos, products and licences.

Since the day we succeeded in buying the Amiga technology, many people have asked us how the future will look for their computer of choice. We got floods of anxious faxes and letters to which we couldn't give an answer at once because things were too early to comment. We will use the opportunity we have now to talk to all of you and present the new Escom daughter company, Amiga Technologies. Some leading developers of hardware and software for the Amiga as well as some of our new licensing partners will present themselves and their projects to us.

To clear up things from the beginning — and that's the point you are all interested in — I want to make the commitment that we are determined to resume production and also want to continue hardware and software development of what we believe is a superior technology. That's why we created Amiga Technologies and we are now hiring the best and most capable people to accomplish this.

For a successful Multimedia company like ESCOM, the Commodore Patents and licences concerning Amiga are considered the key to multimedia technology. Mister Schmitt will say more about this later. But let's concentrate on our immediate plans. As the director of Amiga Technologies, my first priority now is to resume production of Commodore and Amiga computers and bring them on the market as soon as possible. For us, this means September 1995.

I would also like to refer to Commodore computers', Pentium PCs, which will be available in August this year. These will be fully loaded P75 and P100 multimedia PCs. They will be assembled in our own ESCOM facilities. We plan to sell between 50,000 and 60,000 units before the end of this year. Let me point out that the Commodore

and Amiga operations will be separate. Amiga Technologies will only take care of Amiga, whereas ESCOM will provide Commodore PCs.

One month later, we will start producing the high-end multimedia Amiga 4000-T. To succeed in keeping that tight schedule, we negotiated with well known producers in Europe and Asia. For the selection of the manufacturing partner, we will be emphasizing the quality requirements.

Until the end of the year, we plan to produce enough

machines to meet the demand. These machines are already outsold in preorders. In October, the production of the low-end A1200 will begin. We expect to ship enough units as well as CD-32 game consoles to meet the Christmas season demand. Please give us more time to publish quantities.

The takeover of the inventory, which is mainly

composed of spare parts, in the UK and Germany is completed. The rumoured stocks of new Amigas ready to be sold do not exist. For inventory in the Phillipines, we are currently negotiating with the local trustees.

Ladies and gentlemen, the new Amiga Technology will now become the operating center of an international Company held 100% by ESCOM AG. Our headquarters in Bensheim will employ around 50 people for the following tasks: development, support to developers, resellers, and users, production management, Marketing, PR and administration. We also took over the former Commodore development center in Norristown, with its research and development facilities. Eduard Goff, former Vice President and General counsel at Commodore now leads that center. He will talk to you later. Our developers are now working on the next generation RISC based Amigas as well as on improving current models. Here, we are working in a tight partnership with SCALA and MOTOROLA.

Amiga Technologies GmbH expects a turnover of 100 Mio DM in 1995, mainly from the Christmas business with Amiga 1200, 4000 and CD32. Our monthly expenses are evaluated at around 600,000 DM. The break even point should be reached this year. We are confident that we will have rentabilized our 10 Mio \$ investment by spring 1996 with Amiga sales and licences.

Thank you. ✓

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# Multitasking

the switch is on!

by Mark Vitale — from the newsletter of CUCUG

**W**hat is multitasking? And why should I care about it? What's the difference between pre-emptive and cooperative multitasking? Is only one of these "true" multitasking, or both, or neither? What does multiprocessing mean, and how does it relate to multitasking?

These are just a few of the questions I've seen discussed on our BBS in the last few months. And whenever these questions pup up, confusion and misconceptions are bound to follow. After all, multitasking is a technical and poorly-understood subject. So why even bother to tackle it? One big reason is that one of the Amiga's best advantages has always been the excellent implementation of multitasking found in AmigaDOS.

So whether your interest is morbid curiosity, desperate confusion, or an insatiable desire to embarrass a Windows Weenie with your new-found expertise, this article's for you! I'd like to share with you a little of what I've learned about multitasking in my 20 years of experience with many different computer platforms. If you find any mistakes, it **MUST** be because Paul rushed me to finish this; it couldn't **POSSIBLY** be because I don't know what I'm talking about! (Just kidding, Paul. Now put down the hammer, gently.)

To save space, I'll usually use the following abbreviations: "mt" for multitasking and "o.s." for operating system.

## What is it?

Multitasking is a feature of some computer operating systems which allows the computer to run multiple programs ("tasks") virtually at the same time. Read that last sentence again (go ahead, I'll wait). Did you notice that weasel word "virtually?" I had to put that in there because most computers only have one processor, and so can only **really** execute one program at any given moment. For a uni-processor system, multitasking provides the illusion of multiple programs running simultaneously. But before I explain "How did they do that?", I need to explain...

## Why did they do that?

"Because I need to do two things at once, you twit!" is the wrong answer, sorry. The real reasons multitasking was invented were expensive mainframes and slow I/O. Let me explain.

Back in the early days of computing, computers were very rare and in very high demand. The law of supply and demand thus made computers (and access to computers) fabulously expensive. The first programmers had to schedule a personal appointment with the "big

iron" far in advance. They agonized over every little machine code instruction to squeeze as much work as possible out of their fabulously expensive time slot. And I/O was the worst; it was many times slower than any CPU instruction. Always too soon, the precious time slot was gone... and it was time to wait again for the next appointment.

One day, a weary coder realized that while his program was waiting for a very slow I/O to complete, the fabulously expensive CPU was doing... nothing! What a waste! If only he could figure out a way to use those precious little scraps of idle CPU time... Thus was multitasking born, not of convenience or even efficiency, but of desperation. Programmers soon figured out how to write operating systems which could run other programs while waiting for I/O to complete. Eventually they even figured out how to allow multiple I/O requests to be active simultaneously.

Even today, I/O is still many times slower than CPU, so multitasking is still a big advantage when you've got a lot of work to do.

## How did they do that?

First, you need hardware support. Asynchronous I/O is a hardware or CPU feature which allows a program to start an I/O and then do something else until the I/O completes. Next, you need interrupts; these allow the I/O device to notify the CPU when an I/O is complete. This eliminates the need to use CPU for "polling" the I/O device repeatedly, until the I/O is complete. Interrupts can also be used to notify the computer when a given time has elapsed, allowing it to switch from one program to another even if it's not doing any I/O.

Next, you need operating system support. There are many different ways an o.s. can make it look like your computer is running multiple applications simultaneously. Strictly speaking, not all of them are really mt, and this contributes to the confusion. Here's an overview of a few of the techniques:

**Task-switching:** Although mt operating systems can and do switch between tasks (programs), this term has come to mean manual, user initiated task-switching. By itself, this is not true mt, but rather a method of quickly switching to another application and then returning to where you left off. The "foreground" application is the one you're working with right now, and it's the only one that is ever really running. The "background" applications are in a frozen state, waiting for you to return to them before they can do anything. The background applications can reside in memory or on disk, waiting to be paged into memory when you switch back to them. Examples: Software Carousel and similar

programs for early CP/M and MS/DOS systems.

**Time-slicing:** The operating system uses a hardware timer to interrupt itself occasionally and decide whether the running application has exhausted its pre-assigned interval ("timeslice"). If so, another application is allowed to run for a while. Examples: Windows and AmigaDOS both use timeslicing (but in vastly different ways — more later!).

**o.s. extension:** A program attaches itself to the operating system by making itself resident in memory, then taking over an interrupt or o.s. service call vector. In this way, it actually becomes an extension to the operating system instead of a traditional application. This can look just like you're running multiple programs, but it's not really mt because nothing can run while you're in the extension. Examples: MS/DOS terminate-and-stay-resident programs (TSRs) and some viruses (what's the difference, heh heh!).

**Semaphores:** An ingenious method of arbitrating access to shared resources by multiple programs. A semaphore is nothing more than a memory location (anything from a single bit up to 4 bytes or more). Everyone who wants to "serialize" (share orderly access to) a given resource agrees by convention to use the same semaphore. A good real world example of a semaphore is a subway turnstile — it only allows one person at a time to pass through the gate. Another real world example of a semaphore is the lock on a public bathroom stall; as long as everyone uses and respects the lock, it's guaranteed that only one person at a time can use the stall.

### More about semaphores.

Let's keep stretching the bathroom stall analogy to learn more about semaphore operation. If someone already has the semaphore, other applications must wait in a queue until the semaphore is released by the first application. When the first application releases the semaphore, the o.s. moves the next application in the queue from the "wait list" to the "eligible list" (see below). And just as with bathroom stalls, if you try to use a resource without getting its semaphore first, "unpredictable results" and embarrassing collisions are sure to follow!

A full discussion of semaphores (and flags and locks) is beyond the scope of this article. For our purposes, you just need to understand three points about semaphores:

1. The main purpose of semaphores is for resource sharing and inter-process communication.
2. Semaphores are usually accessed indirectly via o.s. service calls (e.g. Amiga library routines). This is because it is obviously impractical for each application to know the real address of the semaphore.
3. (Warning — intuitive leap ahead!) Realize that the cpu itself is a resource! An o.s. can be multitasking by merely providing some service calls that either explicitly or implicitly use semaphores. As soon as

one application must wait on a semaphore, the o.s. switches to the next application on the "eligible list" (see below). This is how an operating system can switch to another program whenever it executes an I/O.

Here's an example of how it works. A word processor initializes and then waits for keyboard input ("think time"). In order to wait in a cooperative way, it just makes a "wait" call to the o.s. for a keyboard event. (Some operating systems have this "wait" built into the I/O request logic.) When the user hits a key, the event wait is completed and the o.s. puts the word processor back on the eligible list. Hey, what's an eligible list?

### Making a list, checking it twice...

Lastly, a multitasking operating system works by maintaining three lists of applications:

1. *run list* — Applications that are actively running **RIGHT THIS INSTANT** on the cpu(s). This list contains only 1 entry (the "runuser"), unless your system is multiprocessing (that is, your hardware has multiple CPUs and your o.s. supports them).
2. *eligible list* — Applications whose awaited event (e.g. I/O, timer, voluntary wait) has completed and semaphore has been satisfied. They are "eligible" to run the next time the CPU is ready to dispatch a new program.
3. *wait list* — applications which are still waiting for an event (e.g. I/O) to complete.

So there you have a few of the methods used to implement mt. Although there are many methods, and many varieties using them, the resulting o.s. will usually fall into one of the two broad categories: pre-emptive or cooperative.

### We now preempt our regularly scheduled program...

Pre-emptive and cooperative multitasking are easy to confuse because, despite their considerable internal differences, externally they usually appear to work the same to the end user. Here's an explanation of both:

**Cooperative:** The name derives from the fact that it only works will if ALL the applications *cooperate* with the operating system and each other. An application is considered "cooperative" or "multitasking friendly" if it periodically and voluntarily yields control to the operating system. In other words, when your o.s. uses cooperative mt, it only takes one bad "apple" to spoil the whole bunch!

A cooperative mt o.s. NEVER interrupts a running task; it has no means of doing so. It can only dispatch the next eligible application when the previous applications surrenders control.

**Pre-emptive:** The operating system can switch to another program at any time; it does not have to wait for

⇨ Page 8

# Amiga Library News

public domain and shareware picks  
from Bill Raecke

## **I**con Deluxe by Brian Tietz

This is the best icon editor I've seen. Period. I know *Iconian* is supposed to be good — and it probably is — but since I don't have Workbench 3.x (yet) I don't know. In the meantime, here is the icon editor for the rest of us. *Icon Deluxe* supports icons of up to 400 x 400 pixels, has all the necessary drawing tools, has full font support and does just about anything you could want from an icon editor. *Icon Deluxe* is shareware. Registration is just \$10. Although the version included here is not disabled in any way, it does have a rather lengthy pause before a "save" that will make the \$10 investment well worth the expense. Look for the public version on MCCC-A\_887.

## **BlitzBlank** by Thomas Borkel

I have written about *BlitzBlank* recently. Well, here is a new version (2.60), so I get to write about it again. It has now been re-written in C (it was previously done in Blitz Basic) so now it's smaller and more system friendly. For those who don't remember, *BlitzBlank* is a modular screen blanker system. You choose which blankers you like and *BlitzBlank* randomly chooses one of them when it comes time to blank your screen. There are 39 blanker modules included with this version. Everything from the old standbys Flying Toaster or Starfield to new things like Mandelbrot blankers and snowstorms. There's bound to be something you like. Check this one out on MCCC-A\_888. (It's in archived format 'cause it won't fit on a floppy otherwise.)

## **FastView** by John Hendriks

This is version 1.51 of what is currently the best picture viewer available. I just wrote about this program last month, so I'm not going to go into details again, but last month we had version 1.41. It's time to upgrade. Look for this on MCCC-A\_889 — the same disk as *Deluxe Pacman* — such a deal!

## **Diamond Caves** by Peter Elzner

I wrote about this one last month too. Last month's version was 1.5. This month we have version 1.8 on MCCC-A\_895 (in archived format).

## **Magic Workbench Icons**

I guess I just can't get enough of those icons! This month there are several new collections. Look for them on MCCC-A\_891, 892 and 902.

## **Deluxe Pacman** by Edgar M. Vigdal

This is version 1.6 (ECS version) of the best Pacman clone ever done for the Amiga. Play this version and you'll

remember why the original was so popular. It's done by Edgar Vigdal — of *Deluxe Galaga* fame — so you know it's good. What more can I say? It's on disk MCCC-A\_889

## **LZX** by Data Compression Technologies

The latest and greatest archive program was released a couple of months ago. This month version 1.2 hits the library. Both the evaluation and the registered version are included on MCCC-A\_893, although you'll need a key file from the manufacturer in order to use the registered version. The BBS is going to be using LZX almost exclusively from now on to save space and to speed up downloads for everyone (since fewer bytes need to be downloaded). (Just now I picked two random .LHA files to decompress. In .LZX format, the first was 48% smaller than the .LHA — the second saved "only" 28%.) Since the program also happens to be considerably faster than LHA on decompression this works out well for everyone. If you don't already have it, be sure to get it from the BBS or from this month's library disk.

## **ExtraInfo** by Nick Christie

This program is intended to replace the Workbench's standard "Information" function that allows you to set tooltypes, set the default tool, set stack size, etc. This doesn't replace the Workbench function — it simply operates as a separate program — but you'll want to use it whenever you need to modify an icon. To begin with, all the standard functions are covered...but you'll find that they work here much easier. In addition you'll be able to easily change the order of tooltypes (it doesn't matter, but it does make things easier to read), cut and paste from one tooltype entry to another, change the icon image (by simply dropping the new image on the app-window, change the number of colors in an icon (comes in real handy when moving icons from 3.x to 2.x), and even unsnap the icon's position. I find that it's a very handy addition to my system. It's available this month on MCCC-A\_896.

## **APlayer** by Thomas Neumann

*APlayer* (full name: *AccessiblePlayer*) is another in a long line of tracker music players. This one deserves special mention because it is probably the most capable tracker player I have run across. In addition, it's probably the easiest to use. It is possible to set it up so that when you fire it up it reads the contents of a directory where you keep your music files, randomizes the list and simply starts to play. No need to keep up with music lists or the like. The only problem with this particular version is that it is an evaluation copy. It will only read twenty mod files

➞ Page 8

# Directory Opus 5

the new frontier

by Richard Fisher — The Metro Amiga Computer Resource of Phoenix

I just picked up a copy of *Directory Opus 5* and stayed up all night and morning playing with it. Let me begin by saying I am amazed at some of the new and innovative programs being released for the Amiga. *Directory Opus 5* is one such program. It works with Workbench 2.0 or higher and cannot be run from a floppy drive.

This is a totally new program that has been rewritten from the ground up. The interface is so different you'll need to read through the manual to find out about all the features, both old and the many new. There are a few features that were in *Opus 4* that aren't in version 5 but the list of items is insignificant compared to the list of new features.

The install uses the Commodore installer which makes it a breeze. During the procedure you can use Opus to completely replace Workbench. It renames the LoadWB command and inserts its own command so Workbench isn't loaded at all. When you see the interface of *Opus 5* you'll understand why one would want to replace Workbench altogether. In fact, you can configure Opus so it looks almost identical to the Workbench screen.

I've found *Opus 5* to be very powerful and stable, even with the use of a Retina graphics board. There is a great sense of pleasure in seeing a program open on a 800x600 screen or larger if you have a really big monitor. To date I have not been able to crash Opus even once. Well, there's something to shoot for! What makes *Opus 5* so powerful is its ability to multitask internally and the object oriented design. Each window (known as Listers), is treated as a separate program and is independent of all other Lister windows. For example, you could be editing your configuration while copying files from one drive to another. You could even copy files from one drive to multiple destinations at one time and be showing pictures from another window.

Upon starting the program you'll notice icons of all your drives on the left side of the main window. Don't be confused into thinking nothing happened. This is the Opus main window. You can confirm this by looking in the title bar which says *Directory Opus* or cycle through your screens to see the real Workbench. That is, assuming you aren't replacing Workbench with Opus.

Double-clicking on a drive icon will open a window with the listing of all directories and files. The number of windows you have open is only limited by the amount of RAM. Closing Listers or button banks will free up RAM.

There are global pull-down menus at the top of the main window. Here you can load, edit or create new button banks, environments (configurations), Lister menus or tool strips. There is a wealth of things you can change that lets you have exactly the set-up you want.

Each Lister has its own pull-downs that are accessed from the window. You also have a tool strip with little images that are action buttons. You are not limited to using the supplied images. You can create your own IFF's to use as the image. You can now assign three separate actions to each toolbar image or button on a custom button bank. The left, right, and middle mouse buttons can call up completely different actions. Now, that's what configuring is all about!

Since *Opus 5* is significantly different, my main concern was, am I going to be able to use my old configuration file. Well, thankfully the programmer, Jonathan Potter, was way ahead of me. However, it can only convert a version 4 configuration file. Loading in an old config will bring up a conversion window which allows you convert different parts of the configuration. You can choose to convert only filetypes by unchecking the other selections. The conversion process even puts the different parts of the old configuration into the appropriate directories. Sounds almost too simple, doesn't it?

Being able to save many different configurations and then load them whenever you want makes it easy to set up different window schemes for special purposes. Say you need a config that will open up four windows with specific directories loaded as part of the config. On top of that you created a custom button bank with all the tools you need for the job. Having only the buttons you need keeps the screen from getting all cluttered.

The manual is similar to the *Opus 4* manual. It does cover all the functions of the program but it is more of a reference. In addition to the manual there is on-line help which is easy to use. All you do is put the pointer over an area and hit the help button. This is handy for a brief description of an item. For instance, you forget what one of those little toolbar images is for. There does seem to be one bug in the program and that lies in the Function Editor. This is where you select AmigaDOS, ARexx, Scripts, or Opus Commands to be run by the click of a button or a double click on a file, etc. You can add more than one command line to be executed, one after the other. It functioned in *Opus 4*, but not so with *Opus 5* even though they say it should. As long as you have only one entry it works fine but if you have more than one, nothing happens. I even used the example they have in the manual and still nothing. It seems to function if all entries are Opus Commands but having an AmigaDOS and Opus command doesn't fly. Maybe one of these days I'll get off work early enough to call Tech Support. [Editor's Note: An upgrade to *Directory Opus 5.11* is available on the MCCC BBS and from the club library. It fixes this problems as well as some others and adds lots of new features as well.]



The former distributor, INOVAtronics, has been replaced by GPSoftware, so there is a possibility that no upgrade path is available and the program will set you back about \$100. But being a great enthusiast of new, innovative programs I decided to get it regardless of the cost. And after using it and seeing the power it contains I'm not one bit sorry. [Editor's note: If you are a registered owner of Directory Opus 4, you can upgrade for \$60 plus a \$5 shipping and handling fee. Have your serial number handy when you call. The regular purchase price is \$129. To order, contact Micro R&D at 1-800-527-8797.]

All in all, this is a well thought-out piece of programming. If you want to see what the Amiga is truly capable of where multi-tasking is concerned, then I highly recommend *Directory Opus 5*. ✓

## FOR SALE

Amiga 2000 HD, 210mg Hard drive, \*9 mg ram, 1084s monitor, Epson wide carriage printer, over 20 books-mags-manuals, 100 floppys of software, games, etc. Derringer 030 accelerator with mmu/fpu (25mhz) upgradeable to 50mhz. The ram is as follows: 1 mg chip / 2 mg on A2091 hard card / 2 mg on ram card / 4 mg 32 bit on accelerator (for mapping). Also included are DSS8 digitizer, and external floppy, and an extra keyboard. ALSO included is a 14.4k modem with data/fax/voice, all cables (of course) and software for all the corresponding Hardware.

I KNOW this is a good deal, the price is \$ 750.00 cash FIRM. There may be more goodies once I get it unpacked.

For questions or to purchase, call Mark: days-(817) 292-4472 or (817) 292-8833 or in the eve call (metro 817) 498-7887.

## Amiga Library News Continued from page 6

into the music list. In order to get the full version with all the limits removed, you need to send in a shareware fee. If you are really counting pennies, you might want to stick with *MultiTracker*. If you can spring for \$25, *APlayer* can offer flexibility and ease of use that even *MultiTracker* can't match. You'll find it on MCCC-A\_899.

### Directory Opus 5.11 by Jonathan Potter

Calm down! No, you can't get *Directory Opus* out of the club library. What you CAN get is an upgrade. If you own *Directory Opus 5.0* or *5.1*, the contents of MCCC-A\_905 can upgrade you to *5.11*. Several pesky problems have been fixed and a number of improvements have been added to this version. ✓

## Multitasking Continued from page 5

the program to voluntarily surrender control by directly or indirectly going on the wait list. For this reason, pre-emptive mt is not nearly as sensitive as cooperative mt to poorly-written applications; that's why pre-emptive multitasking is sometimes called "true" multitasking.

### Round up the usual suspects.

The Macintosh operating system has used cooperative multitasking ever since the multitasking Finder came out many years ago. Therefore, most Mac developers have had plenty of time to make their programs "cooperative," so the Mac multitasks fairly well.

Windows also uses cooperative multitasking, with a little pre-emptive time-slicing thrown in to make sure DOS applications get a fair shake. However, because DOS was never multitasking and Windows used to be merely a task-switcher and not a true multitasker, many clone developers don't know how to write for a multitasking environment. There are MANY Windows and DOS applications that are multitasking hostile. A "hostile" application may use primitive programming techniques such as polling (for I/O) or event loops (for inter-process communication), or it may even disable multitasking altogether! This causes frustrating hangs and lockups while the "hostile" program hogs the CPU. Two examples I use every day are the IrmaLAN 3270 emulator and *Microsoft Access* database.

AmigaDOS is a pre-emptive multitasking operating system; for that reason it can smoothly run many programs at once. The only way an application can screw it up is by misusing the "forbid" service; it is intended only for the rare times when a program must disable multitasking temporarily. Most "hostile" AmigaDOS programs were weeded out long ago by natural selection; Amigans are used to multitasking and will quickly reject programs which don't do it well. One exception is high-performance games, which always run faster if they take over the CPU by disabling multitasking.

### Conclusion (finally!)

I hope this article dispels some confusion and misconceptions about multitasking. If you have any questions or comments (or corrections!), please send me an email; I'd love to hear from you!

Mark\_Vitale@sterling.com ✓

## Thought For The Month

*I only wish that I were what I was when I wished that I would be what I am now.*



# CHAPTER NEWS

## Amiga By-The-Loop Johnny Kitchens

With the arrival of June, I became aware of how bothersome waiting can get. Though I wasn't so bothered by the constant waiting to hear that something was happening to clear up the Commodore disaster. On the other hand I have been bothered by the waiting to see just what Escom plans to do. Sure it's only been a couple of months, but I want to know!

Tonight, David Owens started things off by announcing that the club was taking donations, to be donated in the name of Gary Campbell. People wishing to do so can mail the money to the club's Post Office box, with a note stating that it is for that purpose. Next up was Ned

Kelly, our Librarian and man in charge of METCOM. He reminded us that it will be held on September 30th. The big news he had for us was that the long awaited Internet class would be held at METCOM. Sounds like it will be big, so get your reservations in soon. You won't want to miss that one! Ned told us of a new Super Disk and Fred Fish disk in the library.

From that we went into a brief question and answer session. Someone had problems with colors changing with 2.04. I hoped we helped. Someone was curious as to the Amiga World subscription status. I hope this doesn't turn into the next waiting game. Next was a question on the viability of upgrading to 3.1. Consider it strongly! Then someone pointed out a problem with *Directory Opus 5.0*. The problem has been

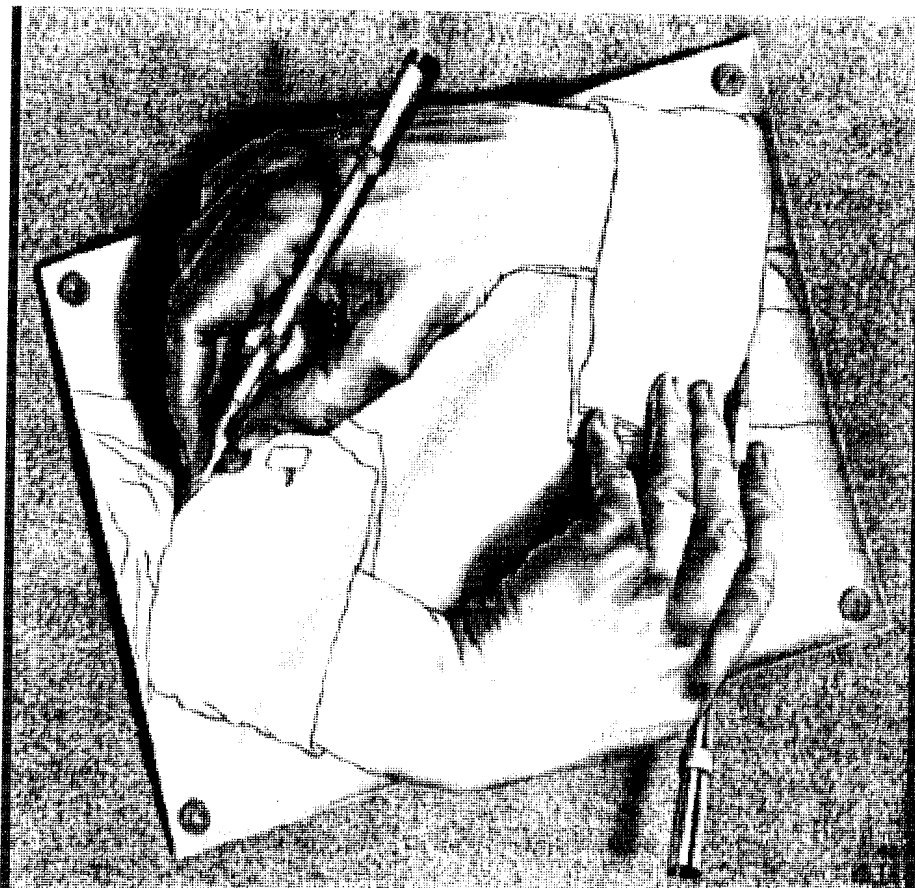
corrected in *Directory Opus 5.1* recently released.

We then moved into the main presentation. With 30 people looking on, we were shown the ins and outs of the CD-ROM drive. While CD-ROMs are virtually sweeping the computer world away, taking over many of the duties of the floppy drive, the Amiga has been a little lacking in this area in comparison. Even with that, having a CD-ROM can give you some new avenues to explore. There are a lot of disks with images, clipart, sounds, and music that the Amiga can take advantage of. Many are stuffed beyond belief in content. I recently got a CD-ROM attached to the cover of a magazine made just for the Amiga! After the CD-ROM demo we were shown a ZIP drive. These are probably the hottest storage media on the market. Dealers can't keep them in stock. This little drive weighs about a pound and stores 100mb on a disk that is a little larger than a floppy disk. The real excitement of this drive is the cost. The drive is \$199 and the disks are \$14.95 each! Compare that to a Syquest and you see why they are hot. I remember when I first looked for one, most dealers hadn't heard of it. Now most have, even if they haven't carried it yet. People are calling everywhere to find one. The ZIP drive connects to an external SCSI connector, and so far they have worked just great on the Amiga. We had problems for our demo, but it wasn't anything that couldn't be overcome.

Finally we had a drawing. We gave a Fred Fish CD-ROM collection away. Congratulations Harold Williams!

## Amiga North Dallas Michael Turner

Because of the growing number of church activities, we no



# CHAPTER NEWS

longer have access to the meeting room we used to have. For anyone who might have missed it, we are now meeting at the Richardson Civic Center at the southwest corner of Arapaho at U.S. 75. We will still meet the third Tuesday of every month at the same time of 7:30. We'll be in the West Conference Room. Apparently, word traveled far and wide as we had over twenty people for this month's get-together in spite of the move.

We got started a little late as Steve and Eddie tried to quiet the chatter to start the show on the road. (Having our last meeting cancelled, due to unforeseen circumstances, there was a lot to catch up on...) Naturally, as is the custom in our meetings, we began with News. Of course, the purchasing of what is left of Commodore by Escom was on everybody's mind. Eddie handed out copies of notices that Escom has delivered to the Amiga community at large. Although the notices were kind of vague, perhaps any kind of movement on this issue is a good sign. In other news, several items were put up for sale by our members including several games and even a turbo accelerator card. Interestingly enough, this led to a discussion of the problems experienced with some accelerator cards and how these problems might be fixed. From accelerator cards, the topic turned to hard drive problems and, naturally enough, from hard drive problems the topic turned to "start-up sequences." After "start-up sequences," naturally script files in general became the new subject of our discussion. At this point Eddie Corr handed out several twelve page handouts demonstrating both

ARexx and the use of the "assign" command in AmigaOS. Eddie's handouts also included scripts that he had used in setting up printers and working with *PageStream*, *ProWrite*, and *Caligari*. The amount of technical information that comes out of our meetings never ceases to amaze me! Have a problem with your hard drive or can't get your expanded memory working properly? Come to one of our meetings! Someone will know the answer!

At this point one of the members demonstrated a program called *Icon Trace* that monitors and lets the user know what tooltypes are used by each file on the screen. Later, Steve Nichols gave an interesting demonstration on compression programs. Steve had taken a Lion King clipart file (from our own illustrious PD library) of about 2 meg and compressed it using the compression programs PKZIP, LHA, and LZX and compared times and the size of compressed files so that we could all see for ourselves the results. Several members mentioned that they were partial to LHA as it was already set up for *Directory Opus*. Later in the evening, Eddie Corr demonstrated a directory utility, *Browser v2.0*, which will also tell you what tooltypes your files need.

Lest I forget to mention, our faithful club librarian, Ned Kelly also had a few thing to mention. Discussing our current possibility of purchasing some more Fred Fish Disks, he mentioned that he had talked to someone about a new CD of Fish Disks that he has not heard about before. Has anyone seen this new CD?

Also Ned mentioned the upcoming METCOM. If you were there at the last METCOM, you know this is an event not to be missed. METCOM '95 will be Saturday, Sept.30 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Arlington Convention Center. Ned also mentioned the need for volunteers to help the event run smoothly. Whether you can stay for an hour or the day, please contact Ned if you can help.

Lastly, as our permanent meeting place is still being discussed, if you have any suggestions please let Steve or Eddie know. Several good places were suggested at the meeting but all seemed to have at least one problem with each of them. If you have a good idea please let Steve or Eddie know about it. Also, Steve mentioned that with the Commodore situation and the decreasing support of software suppliers, it can be hard to get a presentation for our meetings sometimes so if you have an

idea for one please let Steve know about that also. As I mentioned before, we have had some tremendous presentations because of Steve's effort and he has received the most off-the-wall ideas with cool graciousness and open-mindedness. I'm sure he would like to hear from you.

Our next meeting is July 18th at the Richardson Civic Center. See You There!

## Membership Notice

As of this printing, these memberships expired in June.

Daniel Bonaparte  
Kenneth Craig  
Michael Ellis  
Marvin Hartog  
George Khoury  
George Robertson  
Jerry Smith  
Victor Spears  
Arthur Wright

These memberships are due to expire at the end of July.

Joe Algermissen  
Jesse B. Carden, Jr.  
Kevin Blake  
Don Homan  
Jim Pritchett  
John Shuford

# The Fine Print

## The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

**Statement of Purpose:** The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

**Legal Stuff:** The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

**Meetings and Membership:** Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$24 per year or \$15 for six months, and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

## The MCCC News

**Copyright Information:** Material printed in the MCCC News is not copyrighted unless so noted. Articles may be reprinted or otherwise distributed by other user groups or by individuals who may find it helpful as long as proper credit is given to the author and to the MCCC.

**Advertising:** The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — \$36 (\$96); Half Page — \$18 (\$48); Quarter Page — \$12 (\$32); Business Card — \$6 (\$16). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

**Articles:** Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Writer* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, *PageStream* or *Art Expressions* structured drawings, *Professional Draw* clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

**Deadline:** The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

**Extra Copies:** Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

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| Librarian      | Jo Lynn Linville | 817-783-2784 |

## Normal Meeting Schedule

|              |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 1st Tuesday  | MCCC Board of Directors    |
| 2nd Tuesday  | Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter  |
| 2nd Saturday | Metro C-64/128 Chapter     |
| 3rd Tuesday  | Amiga North Dallas Chapter |

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- July 8 Metro C-64/128 Chapter  
1:30 pm — UNT Health Sciences Building  
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth
- July 11 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter  
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center  
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills
- July 18 Amiga North Dallas Chapter  
7:30 pm —Richardson Civic Center  
Arapaho at U.S. 75 (SW Corner), Dallas
- Aug 1 MCCC Board of Directors  
7:30 pm — Okley Moss' Place  
1049 Keith Drive, Hurst



**August Newsletter Deadline — 7am, July 22**

**These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members  
Be sure to show your membership card**

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